

# The Sun Hats of Beano el-Ihop



Science Card No. 67. The harnessing of solar energy dates back thousands of years to the early dynastic period of Egypt. Hieroglyphics on one pyramid in the Abu Rawash necropolis clearly show slaves attaching a primitive photovoltaic array to one of its sides. The pyramid's future tenant, Beano el-Ihop – a.k.a. the Pharaoh of Pankake – was, like his contemporaries, a devout sun worshipper. He was also an intrepid tinkerer, and he designed and built a line of solar hats, which he gave to his numerous wives. Amazingly, they worked (i.e., the hats, not the wives). By harnessing the sun's rays, they generated enough electricity to turn gold into lead. There is reason to believe that the solar cells occasionally malfunctioned. One of el-Ihop's wives who was buried next to him had burn marks over eighty percent of her head, suggesting a sudden and tragic photovoltaic overload. Nevertheless, el-Ihop's sun hat was so far ahead of its time that its design is still being employed today. The Astounding Amenhotep Sisters, an all-girl glam band from Cairo, Illinois, wear reconstituted sun hats in their hit music video, "Splash Register." Energy spawned from the hats reportedly powered the band's electric guitars, theremin, sound system and cappuccino maker for the duration of the video production. Plus, there's a reference to the hats' inventor in the lyrics: "Atop my sundae sits a maraschino; I top my pate with an electric Beano (doo-wah, doo-wah, doo)."